The Perpetuation of Lazy Thinking by Exploiting Writing Artificial Intelligence Tools: Perceptions from Students in the University Of Limpopo

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Abstract

The advent of technological innovation systems has raised concerns about the quality of education. This paper aims to examine and critique the prevalence of lazy thinking and writing among students who rely on online tools during their academic pursuits. It argues that the use of artificial writing software by students not only undermines their intellectual capabilities but also poses a threat to the overall standard of education. Consequently, the emergence of various virtual tools, including ChatGBT, jenni.ai, Calmly writer, living writer, Hubspot's Blog Topic Generator, The CoSchedule headline analyzer app, Portent's Idea Generator, Scrivener, and Hemingway Editor, has become prevalent among students in their educational journey. Acknowledging that technology's progress cannot be halted, it becomes crucial to ensure that such advancements does not replace the essence of creative thinking and writing within academic environments. This conceptual study, employing a qualitative and quantitative approach, explores this concern. The research gathers insights from students at the University of Limpopo on the matter in question. The findings indicate that a significant number of students resort to online software due to laziness, shortsightedness, and a lack of creativity when completing academic assessments. Despite the university's implementation of Turnitin, students still manage to bypass the system using these online tools. Consequently, the study highlights the susceptibility of the quality of education to the influence of online writing software. This paper recommends two key alternatives: firstly, the adoption of Activated Classroom Teaching and secondly, the encouragement of 'Socratic Method' of teaching and learning to encourage active and radical thinking amongst students and improve the quality of education.

Keywords: Lazy thinking, Online software, Students, Technology, University of Limpopo

I. INTRODUCTION

In this article, I aim to critically examine and critique lazy thinking and writing amongst students in the University of Limpopo who occasionally use and rely on online platforms to complete their academic assessments. In my daily observations, I note that the prevalence of lazy thinking and writing among students is a worrisome matter within educational environments. This tendency of lazy thinking, writing and relying on online platforms normally denotes a deficiency in terms of critical involvement, innovative ideas, and diligence in both the reasoning or understanding certain process and the articulation of concepts. This conduct can materialize in diverse manners and carry substantial consequences for a student's educational growth, personal progress, and prospective achievements. Let me put it more explicitly, at times students do not have confidence in their intellectual capacity and creativity. Hence, that limits their personal growth. Because a student or an academic professional who has a sense of personal growth is seen through the force of logical reasoning and creativity.

As an African adage says, "a man who resort to violence as his last resort, is afraid or reasoning". Therefore, I am not perturbed by students who cannot defend their academic assessments because I know that their intellectual and creative thinking and writing is defunct due to excessive reliant on online platforms for writing assessments. This is a conundrum that must be ameliorated the soonest. Although I am not a prophet nor a sangoma, I may assert and predict that if this strategy and trend of laziness in thinking and writing and relying on software to measure the students' intelligence continues, then the quality of our education would be at risk and a calamity waiting to explode.

I understand that I cannot precisely tell what will happen tomorrow as I am uncertain on how today's day would unfold, however, I may highlight that we will end up producing graduates who do not know themselves, who cannot define themselves, imagine going to the internet searching for your personal attributes, thus, if we do not revisit how and what we teach and consume. That would be a disgrace. This article discusses various aspect in relation to the implications of lazy thinking and writing amongst students in the University of Limpopo. It covers the following: how that would threaten the quality of education, lack of creativity and laziness, incompetence graduates, false impression of pass rate amongst others.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

THREAT TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The COVID-19 pandemic has nurtured the culture of digital education, leading the University of Limpopo to embrace and incorporate online learning into its

framework. This approach persists even after the pandemic's effects have subsided (Selelo & Manamela, 2022). While recognizing the efficacy and efficiency of digital methods for teaching and learning over the internet, it is worth considering the potential impact on the quality of academic evaluations. Despite the widespread acceptance of online education within numerous higher education establishments, it brings forth inevitable hurdles, particularly concerning the standard of academic assessments (Mashilo & Selelo, 2021). Undoubtedly, this raises inquiries regarding the integrity, calibre, and credibility of education. Doubts and critique frequently surround the calibre of higher education delivered online. Meanwhile, Zhao (2003: 214) asks this profound question which is still relevant today that: does the teaching and learning experience within the virtual classroom maintain the same level of quality as that found in the traditional classroom? This question is significant because it seeks to assess the current status quo of e-learning in as far as its quality is concerned. Moreover, Selelo and Manamela (2022) indicate that the false notion that students are achieving top grades does not necessarily indicate an enhancement in the quality of education. Being on top of your class does not necessarily guarantee that you would be on top of the world. Because the world and corporates require more than a theory or

concepts. Therefore, in this article, I am trying to demonstrate that the excessive reliance on e-learning and online writing tools have unprecedented and unpalatable repercussions on the quality of education.

In a traditional classroom or lecture halls, direct interactions occur between students and lecturers, fostering increased engagement, improved communication abilities, and the opportunity to seek clarifications (nur Aziz & Rohmah, 2022). However, online learning frequently lacks a comparable degree of personal engagement, presenting difficulties for students in terms of addressing uncertainties promptly and participating in immediate discussions (Mashilo & Selelo, 2021). To put it more simplistically, at times students fathom and engage more on academic assessments face to face than relying on online software for writing. What exacerbate and challenge the quality of education is plagiarism. This occurs wherein students become lazy to copy and paste information from the cloud and use it as it is for their assignments or tests. I refer to Mahomed, Mackraj and Blewett (2023) who have conducted an interesting study on "An innovative online plagiarism course for students at a South African university". In their study, authors have characterized the current trends of relying on online software by students as "digital natives". Therefore, this new cohort of digital natives poses a threat to the

quality of education because they tend to use online writing tools for their academic assessments. Evidently, Mahomed et al. (2023) share some perceptions from students who have indicated that "Students plagiarize because they want the easy way out. They want to pass or obtain the marks required and proceed to the next level without putting in the effort ...." They also found that "Some do it because they find the online article interesting and feel like it must not be paraphrased in order to score higher marks." Using the qualitative tools of analysis, one could observe that it is no longer about the quality of education, however, it is about obtaining good marks and completing the school. Students plagiarise because of laziness and procrastination which results in them working under pressure due to time constraints (Mahomed et al., 2023).

Axelina and Setiawan (2021) By utilizing qualitative-descriptive analysis, discovered that the majority of participants expressed a significant reliance on Google Translate to finalize their written work. The results revealed that all participants used GT quite often and they were confident. A majority of participants (80%) displayed a strong reliance on Google Translate (GT) when accomplishing assignments provided in the classroom (Axelina & Setiawan, 2021:7). It is crucial to recognize that the efficiency of online learning can differ based on the particular circumstances, the Caliber of the virtual platform, the teaching techniques utilized, and the flexibility of both students and lecturers. Although online learning presents challenges, many of these issues can be alleviated through careful planning, robust teacher-student engagement (contact learning), and continuous support for all involved parties.

LACK OF CREATIVITY AND INNOVATIVENESS

Overdose and over usage of AI online writing tools should be seen foes of creativity and innovativeness. The online tools lead to the mind being numb and dysfunctional in some instances because students do not apply their tools of analysis and creativity when writing their academic assessments. Therefore, I am of a view that in the absence of creative thinking, students may exhibit a reduced inclination to challenge limits or solve their own problems. Consequently, this can result in a lack of intellectual progress (Puccio & Lohiser, 2020). Simply put, relying on online platforms lead to intellectual stagnation. Certain educational systems (content) place more importance on memorization and standardized assessments than on fostering creative thinking. Consequently, students may become inclined to reproduce facts rather than engage in the exploration of novel concepts. However, Nurturing creativity can result in a workforce that is more innovative and flexible, improved problem-solving capabilities, and a more

vibrant cultural and artistic environment (Graefe & Omdal, 2022).

FALSE IMPRESSION OF THE PASS RATE

Obsession with passing rate without considering the context and content is a calamity that will impact negatively on students. It creates a situation wherein students are overconfident which consequently creates misconceptions of their abilities and capacities. Clearly, the false perception of pass rates among students occurs when they believe that the pass rate for a specific course, examination, or standardized test is greater than its true value (Quora, 2023). Meanwhile, when students hold unrealistic expectations due to misleading perceptions of pass rates, they might lose motivation and become disheartened upon realizing the actual amount of effort needed. Because the industrious efforts which are needed to pass standardized assessments are much more than relying on the online platforms. Hence, this can have adverse effects on both their academic performance and overall well-being.

Through observations, certain students demonstrate excessive self-assurance in their capabilities, thinking they are more well-prepared than they truly are. This excessive confidence can result in them underestimating the complexity of the content and assuming a generous passing rate. To ameliorate the misconception of pass rates among students, educational institutions and educators convey the course or exam's level of complexity and inspire students to prioritize the learning process over mere passing. Moreover, fostering candid dialogues about grading policies and expectations can play a role in dispelling misunderstandings (Quora, 2023). The 'Socratic Method' of facilitating teaching and learning should be enforced and encouraged so that students could apply their knowledge and understanding.

PRODUCE INCOMPETENCE GRADUATES

The concept of education has predetermined a specific image of intellectual individuals once they complete their qualifications. It recognizes high academic achievers with good grades as exceptional graduates, equating them with intelligence. However, this assessment overlooks the methods that led to these grades. I am contending that individuals who simply memorize and regurgitate information are hailed as intelligent, but often struggle to defend their understanding. Adding to the issue, some students resort to using online software for their assignments due to lazy thinking and writing. It is disheartening that such students are praised as smart and intellectuals, while for instance, marginalized street children face harsh criticism for their poverty and perceived worthlessness.

During my daily encounters in towns and cities, I encounter street children lacking formal qualifications. Meanwhile, those labelled as smart, intellectual, and degree-holders are quick to judge them based on their economic status. I argue that these preconceived notions and premature judgments highlight the incompetence and arrogance of certain academic professionals, students and intellectuals. Having extensively travelled throughout South Africa, I have come to realize that street children often possess qualities superior to those holding mere academic credentials. In fact, some street individuals exhibit wisdom despite lacking educational opportunities to complement their insights or wisdom. However, should they have been given the chance, they could have achieved much more in life.

With a relative and critical perspective, I am writing this article to challenge highly qualified individuals, students and graduates to seek meaningful livelihoods. Many of them remain idle at home, holding their valuable qualifications. Be that as it may, the current economic landscape demands more than prestigious degrees; it requires proactive, innovative thinkers who are not afraid to engage in creative problem-solving. While a degree alone falls short as a solution, coupling it with critical thinking, creativity, and economic engagement can triumph over various economic challenges. In this article, I strongly support and agree with Lebotsa and Khwela (2022) in their article titled "*an investigation into the employability of university graduates: a case of development in planning and management graduates, University of Limpopo*", wherein the authors have critiqued that while the students graduate in numbers, it is quite surprising to witness university graduates grappling with elevated rates of joblessness because of either the scarcity of prospects or their inadequate acquisition of the essential skills and competencies required in the corporate realm.

I endorse this viewpoint because the present nature of educational frameworks has shifted towards a greater emphasis on online platforms. This shift enables students to conveniently utilize digital systems for their academic evaluations. Generally, and relatively speaking, students primarily aim to pass their assessments and attain their qualifications and do not really focus and understand the content. Povey and Ransom (2000) show that this tendency of lazy thinking represents a subtle threat to the person, potentially leading to a state of idleness and reduced intelligence. Imagine a student heavily relying on a calculator to calculate 1+1 equation. It is for that reason that Povey and Ransom (2000) put it that

such students would damage their intelligence and such students have no confidence in their intellectual capacity. I provide examples of different international countries that have the best educational systems in the world.

INTERNATIONAL COUNTRIES WITH BEST EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS: WHAT CAN SOUTH AFRICA LEARN?

Advoy (2023) list some of the best countries in terms of education. As a point of contention and departure, a distinctive aspect of the German education system, it requires students being mandated to undertake a year of hands-on experience in their chosen field before obtaining their degree. This serves as valuable preparation for their transition into the professional world post-graduation. Sweden's educational system is renowned for its emphasis on fostering creativity and innovation. It promotes the development of independent thinking and problem-solving skills among students. Additionally, the Swedish government allocates substantial resources to education, contributing to the maintenance of a consistently high-quality standard (Advoy, 2023). The educational system in Taiwan places a strong emphasis on nurturing creativity and innovation, equipping students for their future careers. Moreover, Taiwan's education system is cost-effective and offers excellent value for the investment (Advoy, 2023). Therefore, South African higher education institutions could draw valuable lessons from these nations to improve their educational systems and the overall quality of education.

III. METHODS

This paper employed qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The researcher has drafted and administered google form to students randomly via an email and WhatsApp. In that instance, the researcher extracted a hyperlink for the form and asked the participants to share the form and the link with their contacts via email and WhatsApp. The form comprised of open-close ended questions. The close-ended questions allowed the participated to only choose from the given options and the open-ended question permitted the participants to give their own perceptions, facts, and ideas regarding the purpose of the paper.

The google form recorded the responses, created and analysed the charts and graphs. The researcher was able to take the charts and graphs and interpret them. This was part of analysing and interpreting quantitative data. However, qualitative data was analysed using a thematic analysis. Using a thematic analysis, the researcher gathered information together and identified responses with similar ideas or perceptions and created themes thereof. Then, immersing and navigating through the responses, the researcher analysed and interpreted the responses and gave

necessary implications and suggestions thereof...

IV. FINDINGS

This section presents the empirical findings from the participants. Literature and arguments presented in this article were subjected to testing for the arguments to be valid and be accepted in social science research. The findings could either corroborate or refute literature. This section gives brief analysis and interpretations from empirical data collected looking at both qualitative and quantitative data. It commences by providing qualitative analysis and interpretations which is later followed by qualitative analysis and interpretations.

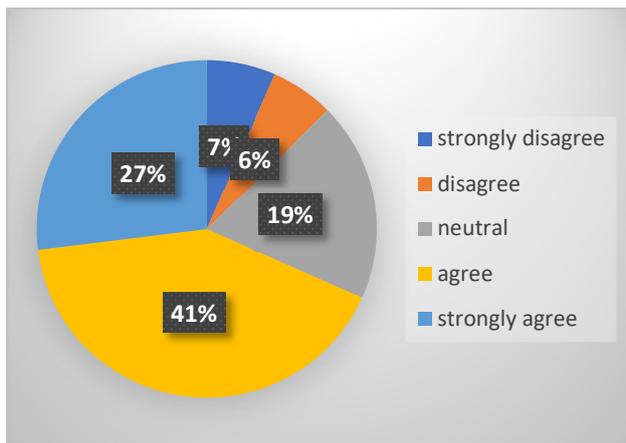*QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS*

Figure 1: The effectiveness of using online platforms for writing academic assessments

The findings clearly demonstrate and illustrate that effectiveness of relying on the online platforms for writing academic assessments. This question and theme were

developed to try and comprehend the effectiveness of relying on the online platforms for writing academic assessments. However, one observes and assesses that the majority (41% and 27%) of the respondents indicated that it is far much better to rely on and use online platforms for writing their academic assessments. This succinctly means and suggests that students find it easy to write their academic assessments by utilizing online tools. Whereas only few (6% and 7%) of the respondents indicated that it is not effective to use online platforms for writing their academic assessments. One could deduce an inference that few of the respondents do not really rely too much on overuse of online platforms for writing their academic assessments.
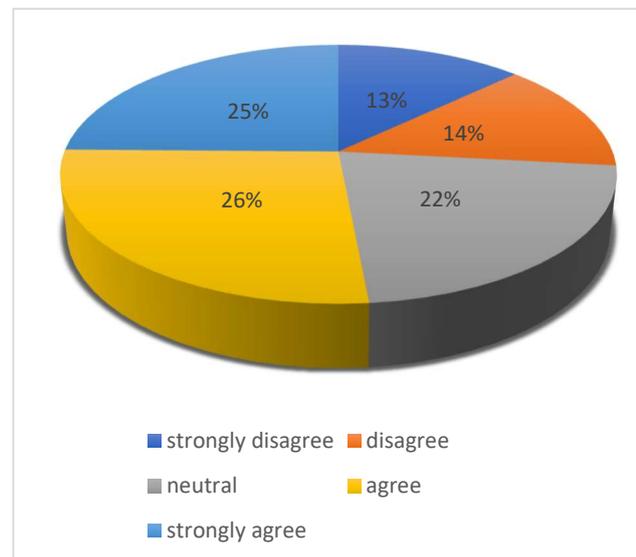

Figure 2: students are often lazy to think and write their academic assessments and rely on the online software to complete their academic assessments

This figure collected data trying to understand if indeed students rely on online

tools for writing and complete their academic assessments. It also attempted to demonstrate and depict the laziness in thinking and writing academic assessments from students by relying on the online software. This was tested against literature provided under literature review section by empirically collecting data from the students. Therefore, the results revealed that majority (26% and 25%) confirm that they are often lazy to think and write, hence, the reliance on online tools for writing academic assessments is utilized by students. The findings corroborate with literature that students are often to apply their thinking and writing to complete their academic assessments through over reliance on online platforms.
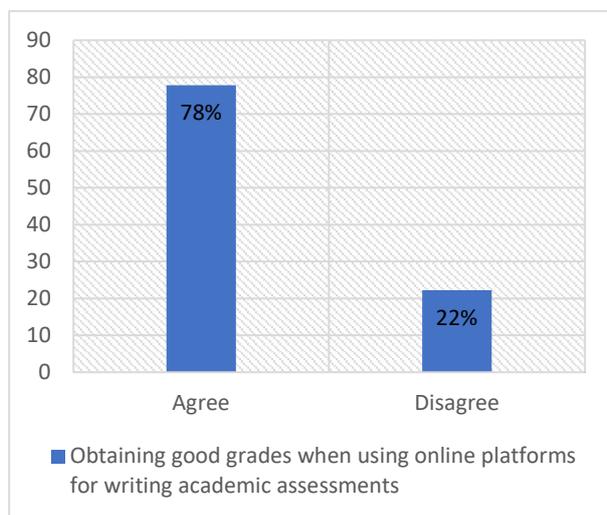

Figure 3: Obtaining good grades when using online platforms for writing academic assessments

On this figure, the respondents were asked this question with only two options. This question was strictly formulated to collect direct information from the participants to meet and fulfil the objectives

of this article. From the figure above, it is very clear and unsurprising that majority of the respondents (78%) show that they often obtain good marks because of using online platforms for writing their academic assessments. The idea behind this could be the leeway to copy from the internet and paste to the assessments with a little bit of editing. Therefore, increase in the pass rates from students is overshadowed by using the online platforms. In actual fact, good grades do not necessarily reflect the quality of education, because the quality of education is compromised by online platforms and high pass rates do not necessarily reflect the intellectual capacity of the students due to relying on the online platforms for writing academic assessments.
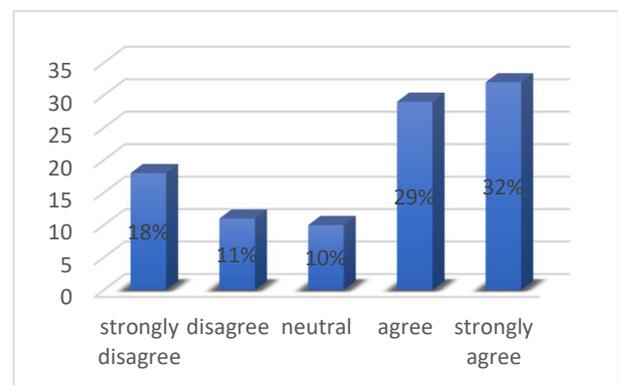

Figure 4: Relying on online platforms often creates lazy thinking, creativity and writing amongst students

This figure depicts the core gist of this article. It sought to confirm and affirm whether relying on online platforms often creates lazy thinking, creativity and writing amongst students. Therefore, the findings indicated that majority of the respondents (32% and 29%) shared perceptions that

indeed using online platforms often create laziness and hinders creativity. These findings support literature and the argument of this study. Whereas only 10% of the participants were neutral, undecisive on the question. On contrary, (18 % and 11%) of the respondents indicated that they do not believe that relying on the online platforms create lazy thinking, creativity and writing. Perhaps, this group of the respondents do not really and excessively rely on the online platforms, however, the suggestion is that these group of the respondents at times apply their thinking, intellectual minds and creativity.

QUALITATIVE INTERPRETATIONS AND ANALYSIS

EXPLOITING ONLINE TOOLS TO WRITE THE ACADEMIC ASSESSMENTS

This section seeks to provide the perceptions and opinions from the participants. This theme was developed from one question: why are you using online platforms to write the academic assessments? This theme was developed using a thematic analysis because this analysis allows the researchers to develop themes to answer the initial research question. The themes below were identified and developed from immersing through the responses shared on the question and grouped similar ideas and perceptions together to establish a theme that holistically covered the views of the respondents under one theme. Here below are some of the opinions and perceptions from students who have responded to the question. Under this section the researcher has identified two key themes from the respondents.

THEME #1: TIME EFFECTIVE

Respondent B indicated that the reason why they are using online platforms "*Because online platforms make it easier to complete assessments in short period of time*". This respondent is supported by respondent X who indicated that they use online platforms for writing academic assessment because "*it saves time and thinking too much*". Respondent Z summed it up by simply saying "*Assessments can be completed in significantly less time*". The respondent is corroborated by respondent M who opined that "*they are convenient*". Therefore, most of the respondents concur that the usage of online platforms saves time. It means that the respondents use the online writing tools to complete their academic assessments on time. This perhaps, could be the advantage of using online platforms in terms of writing and completing the academic assessments.

THEME #2: SIMPLIFY AND REDUCE THE WORKLOAD

Under this theme, the respondents indicated that online platforms make the work easier. In that, respondent F indicated that "*It makes things simple especially for those*

who are doing postgraduates because there is no need of going up and down to campus while you have to go to work actually it save time". Meanwhile, respondent I showed that *"It makes the process of doing assessments simple and quick".* In the meantime, respondent H said, *"To get thorough clarification of concepts utilised in the questionnaires".* Additionally, respondent P indicated that *"To find more literature which is not limited and online platforms such as Quillbot make life simple when it comes English data bundles if they decrease".* Well, generally, there is a consensus amongst respondents which shows that e-learning or online tools simplify sophisticated academic assessments. Be that as it may, respondent U posits that *"To reduce workload for those who will be assessing the assessments".* Respondents K indicated that *"You can easily access more information".* These are some of the perceptions and opinions shared by the respondents in responding to the question: why are you using online platforms for writing academic assessments?.

V. DISCUSSION

This study implies that the people who are intellectually challenged are not those who think and apply their minds, however, are those with a numb mind, with no sense and offers nothing in the socio-economic discourse. I have read and learnt great insights from Wang (2021) who says, *"in the laziest of thinking, you do not even realize the failure".* In his analysis (Wang, 2021), the remedy for failure lies in engaged, critical thinking. Challenge yourself to formulate precise, testable theories and gather information to either confirm or challenge those theories. The author (Wang, 2021) contends that Science involves active thinking and cognition, whereas religion is typically associated with lazy thinking. This is why a significant portion of human advancement and enhancements in quality of life can be attributed to the scientific method. Therefore, I concur with the writings and observations of the author, because from the research findings, it is explicit that students do not really ask themselves critical questions which are thought provoking, hence, they rely on online platforms to think on their behalf. As a result, if students are not rigorous in thinking and challenge the intellectual ability, they will ultimately learn nothing from failure.

Lieberman (2020) indicates that lazy thinking involves continuous stereotypes amongst individuals. This simply means that there is little if (any) efforts made from individuals in as far as radical thinking is concerned. Radical thinking means thinking broadly looking at all sides. It is for this reason that Tsaousides (2016) infers that *"the brain is wired one way but what life and business demands requires us to do more than just what autopilot can handle".* Hence, through the discussion and findings, it is demonstrated that there is a potential danger in relying on

the online software or tools for writing and completing the academic assessments. This simply means that the danger is lazy thinking, producing incompetent graduates which ultimately threatens the quality of education.

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VI. CONCLUSION

As part of the recommendations of this article, I vehemently, with passion, suggests and recommend two alternatives. The first one is that the Activated Classroom Teaching (ACT) pedagogic model, which applies the pedagogies of Curation, Conversation, Correction, Creation, and Chaos to encourage active engagement in online learning be enforced and practised in Higher Educations' Institutions (HEIs) including the University of Limpopo. With this kind of a model students are encouraged to participate in their educational experience by pondering, talking, discovering, and creating. Students practice skills, solve issues, grapple with difficult topics, create decisions, offer strategies, and express concepts in their own thoughts in class by documentation and conversation (Theobald, Hill, Tran, Agrawal, Arroyo, Behling, Chambwe, Cintrón, Cooper, Dunster & Grummer, 2020). This will improve the standard of education and encourage active thinking amongst students. I acknowledge the implementation of technology in teaching and learning, however, if that technology undermines the quality of education, then, that technology must be ditched and discouraged.

The second alternative that I recommend is the encouragement of the 'Socratic Method' of teaching and learning. To give context and background of what 'Socratic Method' is, I refer to Conor (2023), who understands that the Socratic Method, pioneered by the Greek philosopher Socrates, involves a conversational exchange between an instructor and learners. This method is initiated by the teacher's persistent and thought-provoking inquiries, aimed at collectively delving into the fundamental convictions that influence the students' perspectives, thinking and ideas (Conor, 2023).

Despite frequent misconceptions, it is important to note that a significant portion of Western educational system, starting with Plato, relies on this dialectical approach of questioning. Moreover, in a lecture presented by Reich in 2003 as cited by Conor (2023) demonstrates that Socratic Method is not "teaching" per se. It does not include PowerPoint driven lectures, detailed lesson plans or rote memorization. The teacher is neither "*the sage on the stage*" nor "*the guide on the side.*" Therefore, the students should not merely be passive recipients of knowledge, however, they should form part of knowledge production. Which means that the method welcomes the "crazy idea" that offers a new perspective on the matter

but oppose those viewpoints which are not fundamental (Reich, 2003, cited in Conor, 2023).

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